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Vientos de las Sierras

(Winds of the Mountains)

Poems of New Mexico

by S. Omar Barker

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VIENTOS DE LAS SIERRAS

(Winds of the Mountains)

NEW MEXICO POEMS

By S. Omar Barker

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AUG 16 1924

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To M. J. K.

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To OUR DUMB ANIMALS for *The Trapped Coyote;* TOPNOTCH for *Rising Trout, Red Magic of the Hills, What the Camper Hears, Saddle Lure, A Young Cowboy at College, My Lady Fair,* and *The One Word Left;* LARIAT for *Little Trails, Pierrot in the Hills,* and *Summer Snow;* ACE-HIGH for *The Ballad of Cowboy Joe;* POPULAR for *Into the West;* FORD OWNER AND DEALER for *Heart's Desire,* and *Ramblin';* BRIEF STORIES for *What Is Spring to Youth?* and *Nocturne;* OVERLAND MONTHLY for *Sanctuary, Mountains* and *Siesta;* DROLL STORIES for *Lost!;* SANTA FE NEW MEXICAN for *Poppy Day, A Young War Widow Speaks, April In My Mountains,* and *An Aspen Grove in Spring;* THE AMERICAN LEGION WEEKLY for *Nos Camarades;* FOREIGN SERVICE for *Red Poppies;* CONTEMPORARY VERSE for *Life, At Timberline,* and *Mountain Lakes;* LYRIC WEST for *Foreknowledge;* PEARSON'S for *Point of View. Poppy Day, A Young War Widow,* and *Red Poppies* have also appeared in Dr. Frank P. Davis' ANTHOLOGY OF NEWSPAPER VERSE, and *Poppy Day* also in THE LITERARY DIGEST.

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CONTENTS

I. New Mexico.

II. Don Coyote Is My Wild Little Brother of the Foothills (Five Poems).

III. There Are Cowboys, Too, In Our Mountains (Five Poems).

IV. And Flivvers (Two Poems).

V. If I Had Not Turned Pedagogue and Moralist (Seven Poems).

VI. I Might Have Fallen In Love (Eight Poems About That).

VII. Once I was a Soldier (Five Poems).

VIII. Next to the Mountains—the Sea (Three Poems).

IX. Home to My Mountains (Fourteen Poems)

NEW MEXICO

I.

"What a God-forsaken desert!"
It was an eastern farmer, bred to the monotonous luxury of fat hogs and tall corn, that said it; and then I asked him if he knew
How the blue mountains would go walking with you down
On the gray, gray road to Carrizozo town;
Or the young hill water would sing in the night,
Far up on the Pecos where the peaks are white.
And if he had seen, where the plains trails run,
Our tall phantom cities, born of the sun;
Or if he had known, as the black shawls know,
The gray sage paths of Chimayo.

II.

But yesterday I saw a lean-thonged man,
Sun-browned and strong, dig tough mesquite
To clear a virgin plot for planting corn,
Another breaking land for wheat:
Back-bent they were, yet singing in their eyes
I saw the soul-clear spirit of our skies.

It came to me again that we who love
Our *tierra encantada* here
Where cactus hills meet *vegas* lush and green.
Could never hold her half so dear,
If she had been a coddling Mother, who,
For want of hardship lacked a spirit, too.

III.

Oh, a sturdy town on a sand-blown plain
Is as brave as a ship on the storm-swept main!
And the age-old mud on Acoma's cliff
Is a nobler symbol than a hieroglyph.

In the tree-browed hills, so muchachos say,
Great wolves go talking their queer wild way;
And the brown boys know, down at Cochiti,
What the coyotes mean by their jubilee.

In the low green valleys when twilight comes
There's a sweet dim droning of forgotten drums.
Comes a phantom stage on the old town's streets,
And in the cool plaza Spain's knighthood meets.

Do you know how the trees at the desert's rim
March out each night to a battle grim?
And the blue soldier-mountains walk with you as
you go
Down the sand-gray roads of New Mexico?

DON COYOTE IS MY WILD LITTLE BROTHER OF THE FOOTHILLS

THE TRAPPED COYOTE

Last night, and other nights since time began,
I watched the gray moon rise
Through green-black pines, with thrills that only I
Give voice to in my cries.
Poor foolish dogs of Man have howled to hear
The echoes, from my song,
Of their own shadow life of long ago
Before Man led them wrong.
A trap—and I am captive 'neath the moon,
And my weird soul that cried
Fandangoes through the gloom of yesternight
Has shriveled here and died.
Sometime in days to come, my fur, dyed black,
May glisten near the white
Of woman's neck, the wild gray soul of me
Still howling in the night.

RISING TROUT

Oh, I've heard the Red Gods call in the summer and the fall,
And when wintry winds their snowy blankets fling,
But I've kept myself at work, never taking time to shirk,
For I know I'll slip off fishing in the spring.

Summer seashore stuff is fine; I adore the silent whine
Of a bullet when the snow is right for deer;
Shooting ducks is thrilling fun, and I love a good quail gun,
But my heart awaits another time of year.

When the leaves begin to green, and the brooklet's silver sheen
Breaks in ripples where the trout begin to rise,
Then I leave my office flat—business, cares, and things like that—
And get out my bamboo rod and gaudy flies.

For, though winter has its call, likewise summer and the fall,
There is but one time to make my pulses sing:
What care I that worries lurk in the city's sordid murk,
When the speckled trout are rising in the spring!

Oh, I've loved the great white way, and I've watched the moonbeams play
On the ocean where gray ships plow up and down,
For whenever it is night, I'm enchanted by a light,
On the water, in the country or in town.

There is magic in the stars, in the lamps of the motor cars,
And in searchlights with their all-beholding eyes.
Oh, a yellow window pane when the night is black with rain,
Is a sweeter thing that smiling sunny skies!

From the firefly's tender glow to the sheen of northern snow,
I'm a worshipper of glimmers in the night,
But there's only one whose lure seems forever to endure,
And to warm my soul with never-old delight.

Where the firs are dark and tall, and the lone coyote's call
Stirs the camper's heart with vague exotic thrills—
Ah, there's sorcery supreme in the friendly, ruddy gleam
Of a good old outdoor campfire in the hills!

Oh, I seek no El Dorado,
    No distant Holy Grail,
But I am a knight of the sunset hills
    With a quest on every trail.

Wherever a purple mesa,
    Or a mist-veiled mountain peak,
Or a silent grove of firs is found,
    There is the goal I seek.

Oh, dust is on the highway,
    And noise in the town,
But I am a knight of the little trails
    On the purple hills and brown.

Sometimes I think the Demon from his inky pit
Has wriggled up to howl his curses through the night,
Or mayhap that some poor lost soul is doomed to flit
In outer dark, and wails to heaven his dismal plight.

Beyond my cabin walls I know the pines are still,
And through their branches shines the moon with ghoulish light—
Ah! how the cry that rises through them from the hill
Unnerves me! I shiver, although not with fright.

Because I know, despite the terror in that call
That chills my blood and makes me draw the covers tight,
The fiendish yell and ghastly, ghostly wail are all
Some hungry, lonely coyote howling in the night.

THERE ARE COWBOYS, TOO, IN OUR MOUNTAINS

SADDLE LURE

Oh, I've sat on hard park benches and in springy
Morris chairs,
And on silken, flowered mats in far Japan;
I have parked my lazy carcass in the cars of
millionaires,
And I've ridden houdahs in the French
Soudan.

On a swivel in an office—in a steamer chair at
sea—
Why, I've even sat and dreamed on woodland
moss,
But there's just one kind of sittin' that is always
home to me:
That's a-straddle of a good old saddle hoss.

Just a-lopin' through the sage-brush where the
purple mesas rise,
Or a helpin' keep a cow herd on the go—
When there's saddle leather creakin' I ain't
heavin' any sighs,
'Cause I've got *my* seat in heaven here below!

A YOUNG COWBOY AT COLLEGE

Oh, the bloom on the sage up Horse Thief Creek
    Is as high as a man could straddle,
And summer is greening old Rainbow Peak,
    And me with a desk for a saddle!

There's the smell of the herd at Pecos Town,
    A-drifting to summer ranges;
And the odor of oak from foothills brown,
    And fir where the timber changes.

There's bawling of calves at the H Bar Cross,
    And wind in the June grass rippling—
But here I sit with a spectacled boss,
    A-roundin' up Keats and Kipling!

Oh, out on the mesas the punchers ride,
    Their saddles and chaps are creaking—
Where men learn comradeship side by side,
    With never a need for speaking.

The grind of the cities is in my ears,
    Wild chatter all jumbled together,
But my heart is lonesome and darn near tears,
    For the feel of saddle leather!

THE BALLAD OF COWBOY JOE

'Way out on a ranch in New Mexico,
Yippity yayhoo, ol' Cowboy Joe,
Where cowpunchers let all their whiskers grow,
Yippity yayhoo fer Cowboy Joe.
We found an old sock in a pot o' tea—
It smelt like a sock with a pedigree—
The cook on the roundup was Hing Wah Lee—
Yippity yayhoo—Cowboy Joe!

Sweet Joseph he grabbed fer his ol' six gun,
Yippity yayhoo, ol' Cowboy Joe!
The Chiny boy seen him an' started to run—
Yippity yayhoo, from Cowboy Joe!
But Joe pulled the trigger as quick as you please,
And plugged him a-runnin' with sharp-shootin' ease,
Till Chink was as holey as Switzerland cheese!
Yippity yayhoo—Cowboy Joe!

The sheriff he come on a big gray hoss,
Yippity yay after Cowboy Joe,
Arrested Sweet Joseph and says to the Boss:
Yippity yayhoo fer Cowboy Joe!
"These boys here ain't got no respect fer the law,
They're slow on behavior and quick on the draw,
We'll try him fer murder—say, lend me a chaw!"
Yippity yayhoo fer Cowboy Joe!

Us boys was as sore as a tenderfoot's shin,
Yippity yayhoo, 'bout Cowboy Joe,
But Sheriffs is Sheriffs, and so we give in—
Yippity yayhoo, pore Cowboy Joe.
They took him to court at the county town,
We knocked off the work and went gallopin' down
A hundred come in from the country aroun'!
Yippity yayhoo, ol' Cowboy Joe.

The courtroom was crowded, and what do you think?
Yippity yayhoo fer Cowboy Joe—
Sweet Joseph admitted he'd punctured the Chink!
Yippity boohoo fer Cowboy Joe!
But the Jedge took a chaw an' says: "Let him go free!
Fer killin' a *man* he'd git swung from a tree,
But the lawbooks don't mention no heathen Chinee!
Yippity yayhoo fer Cowboy Joe!

THE SPRING SONG OF THE COWBOY

Oh, songs of spring that poets sing
    Are sweet as childish prattle,
But the tune I hear most every year
    Is the bawling of rawboned cattle.
When winter snow decides to go
    From mesa, plain and valley,
It leaves hills bleak, and cows so weak
    They ain't got strength to rally.
Pore bags of bones—they can't eat stones—
    The grass ain't started growing,
And as we ride, on every side,
    We hear their hungry lowing.
Some fall in bogs, some back of logs,
    Some die before we find 'em.
The coyotes know how pore cows go,
    And sneak along behind 'em.
Us punchers fight both day and night
    To help cows fill their paunches.
From pools of mud that chill their blood
    We tail 'em from their haunches.
Pore cows ain't such an awful much—
    Our boss might stand the losses—
But when they bawl, we go—that's all—
    Our hearts are like our boss's.
And so the song spring brings along
    To me ain't lovers' prattle:
The tune I hear when spring is here
    Is the bawling of hungry cattle.

Traced in the flicker of greasewood fire,
The Cowboy Kid saw his heart's desire.
Still but a lad at a play cow camp,
His ears heard the milling *remuda's* stamp,
And he knew his heart would know no rest
Till he could scratch 'em along with the best;
And over the shouldered mesas ride,
His saddle a-creak with his horse's stride:
A boy a-dream for the time when he
Could answer the range's witchery.

II.

Ruddled there by a hearthfire's flame,
Grizzled and old as a Salem dame,
His hair as whitish as alkali,
The Cowboy Kid sees his past go by.
He smells the sage from the mesa's rim,
And the days come tumbling back to him;
Days that were tanged with the smell of hair,
Burnt till the brand came clean and fair;
Nights that were droned with a milling herd—
His feeble heart within him stirred--
Out of the phantoms in the flame
Into his soul the old call came.

III.

Oh, a heart knows not when a body is old,
And riding days are a tale that is told—
For now he would saddle and over the hill,
Ride to the ranges that beckoned him still.
There by the fire as he fell asleep,
The old man's pulses ceased their sweep
Of cowboy blood through his leathered veins.
A West wind called from his sage-brush plains,
And off to dim ranges of mounted men,
The Cowboy Kid rode forth again.

AND FLIVVERS—

HEART'S DESIRE

The dim gray line of camel caravans
That speed unerring over trackless sands,
From nowhere into distant city gates . . . .
The turbaned pomp of Moslem's potentates . . . .
A daughter of Seville in gaudy shawl . . .
Brown-legged coolies by the ancient wall . . . .
The wistful ring of Yukon's midnight suns,
Circling . . . . circling where the wolf pack runs:
These were the distant goals of Heart's Desire—
Their image in me stirred nomadic fire.
These unattained my life was death and woe!
I craved adventure in the world, and so
Today 'tis mine! No longer am I bored:
I've saved my scanty plunks and bought—a Ford!

Some fellers sing fer a little gray house
By the side of the road, with a soft-eyed spouse
    Hummin' some old tune.
Other guys dream of the flyin' fish
On the Mandalay road, or they even wish
    They could fly to the moon.

Some for the Romany Patteran—
And some for the paths where the pipes of Pan
    Yodel a tinklin' lure—
Some hit the dust of the cowboy trail,
And some ain't alive out o' sight of a sail—
    Funny ideas fer sure!

Roads and the "where" ain't a-botherin' me,
Jest so they're wide as a flivver be,
    Furrin or jest here nearby;
Any road's good and the travelin' great—
We're happy an' lucky—unworried by Fate—
    Ramblin'—my flivver and I.

IF I HAD NOT TURNED PEDAGOGUE AND MORALIST

WHAT IS SPRING TO YOUTH?

What is Spring to Youth?
My youth loved wistful Fall,
Dead, yellow leaves, and all
That preached death's solemn truth
In anile gold.

I was embodied Spring.
I knew its ecstasies,
And felt its throbbings tease
In Summer's sun or sting
Of Winter's cold.

Why, what was April's rain
To Youth? Ah! age's heart
Is Autumn's counterpart,
And Spring is sweet with pain,
Now I am old.

TO THE NORMAL UNIVERSITY

Alma Mater, this word for you:
That you have stood, warm-hearted, spirit-true,
In this new-old Southwestern land,
Knowing its heart, uplifting its hand.
No pompous peddler of smug sophistry—
Wise friend and comrade, you have been to me.

THE TEACHER'S RECOMPENSE

If I could teach just one
    Good thought that would meet
The need of some child heart,
    Whose life's a long hard street;
One word he would remember
    To fill his life with cheer,
It would be recompense enough,
    Could I but know—while here.

A MEASURE FOR MAN

I hear folks measure up their friends
And foes, both men and ladies;
For some they foretell happy ends,
For many, Hades.

This man, they say, is truly bad!
He cusses and plays poker.
That fellow there is lost—poor lad—
He's such a smoker.

That woman paints her face, and thus
Her character besmirches.
(They pin the label "hell" on us
Who dodge the churches).

They classify the bad and good
By catalogues of vices,
And smother human brotherhood
In moral crises.

They growl at jolly songs we sing—
Who knows what right or wrong is?
The human heart's a greater thing
Than any song is.

Now here's a measure, friends, for man,
That's short and sweet and snappy:
That one is good who, when he can,
Makes others happy.

Forget the old vice catalogue—
One evil's like another—
Thank God for every man—or dog—
Who loves his brother.

THE OLD MILL WHEEL

I don't suppose that anyone
Has ever counted mill-wheel turns—
You, old wheel, turning . . . turning . . . .
Lagging like a lazy boy,
Slow when water was low,
Running like mad with a rim of foam
Whenever it was high—
Did you ever try?

Sometimes I used to try to count:
"One . . . .two . . . . " bare legs crossed
And sitting back against a tree
Where rainbow mist was in my face,
I'd start, but Fairies in the spray,
Laughing and dipping round and round,
Kept making fun of me,
Until I couldn't, don't you see?

I don't suppose that anyone
Has ever counted mill-wheel turns—
I used to try, and tell myself:
"Now that's just a million times around!"
Or was it a thousand?
I never could
Count Fairies and mill-wheel turns at once.

I don't suppose that anyone
Has ever counted them—
Mill-wheel turns—Fairies—dreams—
It's been a long time, too. And now—
Why, who would go counting turns of the mill
Now that the old wheel is still?

SCHOOLMASTER

It is not for the tragedy of wispy hair
Bled ashen by dull lances of monotony,
That I must pity you, nor for gray grooves of care
Unvaried days have plowed upon the face I see.

Oh, I could weep for these, schoolmaster, and
forget
That they are but the flesh that dumbly testifies
The labored tread of time. Tears for dead years
—and yet
Dry ache is in my heart when I look in your eyes.

Ghosts of surrendered dreams are there; dust of
a soul
Once passion-stirred for learning; poor dim
shadow-gleams
Of that once radiant shaft of truth sent to enroll
In Plato's ancient quest, each sturdy John o'
Dreams.

You knew the call. Your hills gave you resolve,
and down
From them you came, whang-muscled, arrow-true
of mind.
Through college days, and nights of labor in the
town
To pay drab toll for life, your soul withstood the
grind.

But when one day you stood, a vision in your face,
Crusader for the absolute and unfound truth,
An unseen specter came and took his silent place,
And cast the first chill shadow on the fire of youth.

Oh, were you not to blame, schoolmaster, if you gave
Soul strength and precious time to tutor careless brains,
Exhaust and bind yourself instruction-drudge and slave?
Tired days, tired nights . . the vision dimmed . . . slow-woven chains.

One thing to peddle facts, another to hold fast
Upon the hope and promise of a sacred gleam.
Your grim, gray-visaged specter, Life, stands now at last
And baffles you with fading flickers of your dream.

Oh, I could weep the pity of senility—
Poor wisps of snow-gray hair—the Reaper's thin disguise—
But tearless ache, schoolmaster, must break the heart of me,
To glimpse the ghosts of vanished dreams that haunt your eyes.

In pauseless march the unforgiving years
Will pass, and things that now are cease to be.
The hopes of youth may dwindle out in tears,
Or turn to gold through Fortune's alchemy;
But all must change, for this is Fate's decree:
That youthful loves and joys and ardent fears
Must flicker out in mists of memory,
Like lights that soften when night fog appears.

So passes life. Yet when the crowding grind
That daily is our great antagonist,
Shall press me hard in body, soul and mind,
Or heartaches throb which I cannot resist,
Kind memories will come, and I shall find
Calm sanctuary in their purple mist.

I MIGHT HAVE FALLEN IN LOVE.

(Poems About That)

CREPUSCULE

If I had not seen the sun . when it rose,
How should I have known
Its tenderness?
Oh, I am glad I could look in your eyes
That first dear day you loved me!

PIERROT TO PIERRETTE

If I had only known the moon
Was white and cold,
I would have saved my songs
For the red fireside and you.

But now I have broken my heart
For the moon of a dusky evening,
I cannot find the glow of your hearthside
In the white night.

LOST!

Dear St. Anthony, please come 'round,
Something's lost and can't be found!

Last night I walked in an old rose garden
With a fair maid (and I ask her pardon),
But I rather think what I lost last night,
She *stole* from me in the sweet moonlight!

I can't say when it first was missing,
She may have robbed me in the act of kissing!
It's been invulnerable heretofore,
And now I've lost it for evermore!

Dear St. Anthony, perhaps I'm stupid—
Calling on you instead of Dan Cupid,
For now my own is beyond all aid,
He might steal me the heart of the maid!

NOW YOU ARE GONE

It used to be that tawny moons,
    Or little things like daisies wet with dew,
Were happy, wistful songs to me—
    When I had you.

Somehow a baby's golden curl—
    Though you might be across the world away—
Was like heart-music then—but now—
    What can I say?

I never knew that it was you:
    That poignant sweetness of green hills in
        Spring,
The deep content of twilight hours
    When crickets sing.

But now that you are gone from me
    The mellow soul of life seems vanished too.
Green hills are only hills, that once
    Meant dreams—and you.

I have loved in summer,
    I have wooed in spring,
Oh, the yellow, mellow fall
    Is a time to sing!

Lovers love the seasons,
    Spring, they say, is best—
Leave me wayward winter-time,
    They may keep the rest.

Snowflakes are but kisses
    From a tender sky—
Oh, but love's a lovely thing
    When first snowflakes fly!

Snow's a white-armed lover,
    Earth a modest maid—
Tenderness is truth, my lad,
    Passion's but a jade.

I have mooned in spring-time,
    Summer and the fall—
Now I know when there is snow,
    Love is best of all..

FOR FORGETTING

There will be things to remember
And to forget,
And I shall choose September
Winds that wet
Your hair with halo-mist,
That gold-haze day we kissed
And knew all breathlessly:
This for my memory.

There will be your lips to remember,
But to forget—
Shall I not choose September,
And . . . regret?

MY LADY FAIR

There's a winsome brown-eyed maiden
Not far from where I write;
Her smile with love is laden,
Her skin is pink and white.

I've never seen her frowning;
She looks so sweet to me,
That were I Keats or Browning,
I'd write her poetry.

I go to her quite often,
And though I'm sometimes late,
Her brown eyes seem to soften—
She gives me every date!

She's not my sweet patootie;
She craves no motor car,
For she's a painted beauty
On this year's calendar.

NOCTURNE

I.

A white night for purity,
A chaste moon and the earth
In robes of folded snow
Beneath the black hill pines.
White nights for purity
And soul-sweet thoughts of you.

II.

Yet for the quiver of your kiss,
Your dear warm arms about my neck,
Let it be graying twilight
In some rose-scented June . . . .
Somewhere a red-gold moon
Couched in the arms of wistful trees . . . .
A garden walled with passion vines . . . ..
Warm shadows from low-lying hills—
Young twilight . . .mist-gold moons:
These for the heart-sweet of your lips.

ONCE I WAS A SOLDIER

POPPY DAY

"Pushin' up the daisies, Bill,
Shovin' up the blooms,
Feedin' poppies on a hill,
From our peaceful tombs."

Mac and me were buddies then,
Fightin' over there—
Smilin' Mac, a-jokin' when
Grim death was in the air.

We'd jest been a-wondering
What we'd likely do,
Comin' home and everything,
When the war was through.

"Pushin' up the daisies, Bill—
Reckon that'll be—"
(Mac he smiled and rolled a pill)
"Goin' home fer me!"

" 'Member, Bill, that poppy bud
Where poor old Lem lay dead?
Why, Bill, he'll never mind the mud,
With poppies overhead.

"Ain't as if we'd croak in vain—
When we're gone, you bet,
Folks'll be at peace again—
People won't ferget!"

Poor old Mac, he'll never mind,
Lyin' with the brave,
Blood-red poppies in the wind,
Noddin' on his grave.

Poppies growin' from his heart—
Seems like it's my own
Them poppy roots will bust apart
Since old Mac is gone.

Folks ain't all forgot, I guess,
And some still shed a tear—
Red poppies ain't fergetfulness,
And poppy day is here.

NOS CAMARADES

(Written When the French Went Into the Ruhr)

Somewhere in France and Germany the poilus march again,
Horizon-blue is in the streets and helmets drip with rain.
Crowds gather in the old French towns to watch their men depart,
And oh, the tramping march of feet re-echoes in my heart!
For I have known these *camarades,* and I have seen them go
From little farms and homely shops to meet a brutal foe.
And I have seen grim ruins clear from Belfort to the sea,
And who is there that can forget the tears of Mére Marie?

They tell me France is making war, and that her poilus lust
For vengeance on a fallen foe, to trample in the dust
A peaceful, helpless people, just to even up the score
Of bitter ancient enmity with cannon's dreaded roar.
But I have known the hearts of them, sore stricken in the war,
And just a chance to live in peace is all they're asking for.

Drear winter rain pours o'er the walls of ruins at Stenay—
In cozy, tight-walled farmsteads German children laugh and play.
Oh, we're done with war-time hating; and grim poilus in the Ruhr
Have dreams of home and children, not of vengeance's mad allure.
Who calls their marching madness and their armed hand arrogance?
Ah, some there are who know the heart and suffering of France!

Marcel is in his uniform, his bayonet is bright,
Old comrades of the Belleau line are standing for the right.
No battle's roar has torn the air—we're hoping none will start—
But oh, the poilus' marching tramp finds answer in my heart!

A YOUNG WAR WIDOW SPEAKS

(On Poppy Day)

This is the day when I shall wear
Three red poppies in my hair.

Three red poppies, red as blood,
Symbols of my widowhood.

Poppies look gay in hair like mine,
Gay as the sparkle of rich-hued wine.

And when I smile from a broken heart,
People will wonder and whisper apart.

"She has forgotten!" I hear them say,
"And flaunts red flowers in bold display!"

But these red poppies are signs to me
Of a blood-stained grave across the sea.

I shall wear one for a woman's loss—
The grief of a Mary at Calvary's Cross.

And one for the buddies who lie at his side,
Bravely they fought and nobly died.

Two red poppies upon my head
Are heart's-blood tokens for the dead.

The third I'll wear for a woman's plea
That we may cherish eternally.

The flag of our soldiers who perished in France,
Keeping the faith with devout vigilance.

This is the day when I shall wear
Three red poppies in my hair.

Poppies today are in street and mart—
I wear them forever, in my heart.

The good old doughboy lingo that we used across
in France,
Like "hoosegow," "parleyvoo' and "coneyac,"
Is on its woeful way to join the feel of O.D. pants,
In the limbo of forgotten bric-a-brac.

We used to talk of "Jerries" and their "G. I.
cans," and such,
Of "slum," or maybe "goldfish" for our chow,
But wifey thinks "Mitt-wobbler" is some naughty
word in Dutch,
And what does "K. P." mean to people now?

"Toot sweet!" we used to tell 'em, or to "come
on, shake a leg!"
By "finee" the mess sarge meant you're out
o' luck.
"Red horse" meant corned bill rations, and an
"oof" was simply egg,
While private was the payroll name for "buck."

Oh, of course we can't retain 'em, though we
sometimes use 'em yet,
And the good old lingo's bound to pass away,
But there's one word from the army no true
soldier will forget:
Good old "Buddy's" in our talk—and hearts—
to stay!

RED POPPIES

Red poppies are a sign to me
Of things I never more may see.

Of ships that plied to St. Nazaire
To carry soldiers over there.

Along the shore where poppies blow
We used to watch them come and go.

Of twilight strolls when lonesomeness
Was softened by Yvonne's caress.

Of endless days of sweating drill
Where poppies grew on every hill.

In fields of wheat and sudden death
Red poppies spread their soothing breath.

Beside a shattered church of stone
A poppy dared to bloom alone.

When Jimmie Morton tumbled dead
I saw a poppy kiss his head.

Ah! tears must come when memory's
chance
Recalls the hills and fields of France,

Where poppies grow eternally
And feed upon the heart of me.

NEXT TO THE MOUNTAINS—THE SEA

SEA MEMORIES

A moonlit mist lies over the hills
    Like fog-swept ships at sea,
A scudding wind through aspens shrills—
    The whistle of spars to me.

Somewhere beyond the moveless plain,
    Near a fortunate town I know,
Gray night comes down through a gauze of rain
    Where lights of a harbor glow.

The moan of a light ship guarding the reef
    Where tramps of the sea loom by,
Is filling the night with its sweet old grief—
    And a landbound farmer I!

When sun's on the hills and the corn is young,
    A sailor can half forget,
But oh, the songs that the sea has sung
    Come back when the night fog's wet!

My cottage glows with a cozy light,
    But sea fog shrouds the hill—
My heart is a sailing ship tonight,
    And the ocean claims it still.

LIFE

Dreams and a gay ship
    Scudding to sea . . . .
Ghosts and a gray ship
    Beckoning me.

Oh, I'd like to settle down in some quaint and quiet town,
Where the harbor fills with sails home from the sea,
There to watch with peaceful eyes, homely hills and friendly skies,
And to hear the shore waves lapping on the lea.

Just a little shanty there, and a friend or two to share
Memories of ventures when our hearts were young.
Just to watch the ships come home, just to smell the tang of foam,
And sometimes to hear a seaman's chantey sung.

Oh, I'm longing more and more, for a little place ashore,
Now that time has turned my life-ship toward the West.
There's adventure on the sea—ah, its voice is sweet to me!
But the harbor's calm is calling me to rest.

Yet I know that some brave night, schooner sails would beckon white,
And the sea would whisper magic in its moan—
Oh, 'twould break an old man down, biding there within the town,
With his heart a-sail for seas it once had known!

HOME TO MY MOUNTAINS

MOUNTAINS

I have known the prairies,
    I have loved the sea—
Open air everywhere
    Incense is to me.

There's a lure to islands,
    Neckerchiefed in foam,
Yet I know this is so:
    Mountains are my home.

Mountain trees are friendships,
    Mountain tops are thrills,
Sympathy comes to me
    From the warm-armed hills.

Wanderers from mountains
    Tell me truthfully,
When the night moon is white
    Mountains sail the sea.

I have sailed to London,
    Known the lure of Rome—
Oh, but mountain memories
    Bring me breathless home.

PIERROT IN THE HILLS

Oh, what is the use of a printed book
    When I've caught the moon in the hills,
And the ghost of the wind, with finger a-crook,
    Is dancing on mountain rills?

There's never a word I've learned to write,
    And never a book-told tale
That is half so gay as the merry sprite
    That teaches the nightingale.

They say I'm a fool with a funny look—
    Well, I learned my A B C's—
But what is the use of a printed book
    When I've caught the moon in my trees?

FOREKNOWLEDGE

Well, if the brook can babble and sing,
    And the pines only sigh,
That's not such a puzzling thing:
    I can tell you why.

Daybreak brings to the gypsy clown
    New paths for his rills,
But the pines see the sun swing up and down
    Over changeless hills.

Brooks tumble along and never foresee
    Their joys or tears,
But the pines have known what it is to be
    For years and years.

WAITING

What is it the pines are waiting for?
Out on the roan-rocked hills
I have sat in the mellow August sun
And watched them,
Their sturdy, black-scaled arms and trunks
Etched in clear still lines
Upon the cobalt canvas of the sky,
Their tufts of needles all upturned
In glistening expectancy to the sun.
Sombre and calm and still are the pines . . . .
Their calm has not deceived me,
For when a breath of wanton wind
Stirs along the hill,
I hear them breathe a furtive, uncompleted sigh.
And while the aspens are still quivering
In gay abandon at the passing kiss of the breeze,
My pines have gone back again,
Back to their wistful waiting.
Ah! my heart has ached for the pines,
Waiting—waiting—out there on the sleeping hills
For in the dark of night I have heard them,
Sobbing in the arms of the wind.
And when another day has come
I have found them
Waiting again in futile stillness . . . .
Waiting, waiting for something that never comes.

AT TIMBERLINE

Just where the first gray grassy bench
Has clambered sternly out of spruce and pine,
Two crooked trees have sucked scant vital sap
From stony breasts, and felt bleak winds enwrap
Their limbs with death, to stand at timberline.

Now one no longer greets the wrench
Of twisting gales with sturdy-muscled glee,
Nor croons soft, whirring lullabies in June.
He whistles high, wild tunes to winter's moon,
And down-hill points to ghosts whom none can see.

But when next summer's cloud mists drench
These steeps, and vagrant breezes kiss at will
Their lover trees, and find one standing gray
And still, with one light sigh they'll whisk away
To court young branches farther down the hill.

These are the things my heart had lodged and
loved,
As when some lone hill cabin welcomes home
With simple faith its grizzled miner men:
Strong plowmen's hands, fresh from their fer-
tile loam,
Slow setting suns, and mellow-cockled souls,
Old songs, spring hills, stout hearts and salt
sea foam.

These were my soul until one gentle day,
I rode up timbered mountains drowsily,
And topped the hill and viewed in sudden awe
A limpid jewel tucked in tree-fringed lee
Of higher slopes, and added these three more:
Still mountain lakes, and truth, and purity.

SUMMER SNOW

The blue fringed gentians and the firs and I
    Are intimate with beauty true,
Steadfastly pure and deep as mother love,
    Yet freshly cool as morning dew.

June snow is more than winter's residue:
    It is Madonna of the hills,
White mother of gray rivers on the plain,
    Of trout-filled pools and mossy rills.

And if the firs stand tall and straighter here
    Beside gray peaks where melting snows
Inlay mosaic patterns rare and fine—
    Is it to honor her? Who knows?

On cliff-browed mountain peaks in summer time,
    Far from the world that others know,
The blue fringed gentians and the firs and I
    Are boon companions to the snow.

APRIL IN MY MOUNTAINS

Comes April in my mountains,
And where a dapple robe of snow
Has spotted pine-clad slopes,
The warm brown earth begins to show.

The swell of snowdrops budding
Bursts through the moss along dear rills—
And oh! the wistful heart
Of me, far from my friendly hills!

Soft, vagrant clouds go scudding
Along the sunny sky and bring
A gift of rain to court
The purple violets of spring.

Oh, I have loved my mountains—
All dapple-brown and tender green—
When spring comes throbbing through
With myriad beauties unforseen.

Sweet mists are on the loma,
And in my heart a mist of pain—
Comes April in my mountains
In a gown of silver rain.

AN ASPEN GROVE IN SPRING

In snowbound February I have seen
The stark gray spires of aspen trees, as lone
As if some bourn of darkness lay between
Their neighbor trunks in friendly clusters grown.

And when the keening wind whined down the hills,
Each barren aspen sang its own wild strain.
What though brown roots entwined with tender thrills?
Gray groves above stood stiff in grim disdain.

Not so when Maytime in a sheening gown
Of rain, with yellow fringe of sunlight trimmed,
Brings vernal life and animation down
From smiling skies no longer frost-bedimmed.

Then tender, greening leaves dance and caress,
In intimate accord they twit and sing,
No longer trunks are stark in loneliness,
For trees—and hearts—grow friendly in the spring.

WIND IN TREES

There is no sound in the world
Like wind in trees.
Unless . . . . .Is it a sound when life
Comes swooping through the souls of men
In vast uncertainties?

I have stood on fir-robed hills
When, all unseen,
And out of nothing from the West,
The wind has brought its vague unrest
To stir calm-hearted trees.

Gray as a pointing ghost,
Sapless and stark,
A lone and lifeless patriarch
Stands stiff and senses not the host
Of passions in the wind;
And yet where boughs are green
A quiver runs
In ecstasy or protest mild,
As if some singing pulse beguiled
In them a buoyant mien.
Ah, when the whistling blast
Sweeps down the hills,
And, chanting high wild litanies,
Uproots and crushes fated trees,
Unbending trunks must fall!
The while with vibrant thrills
And ecstasies of battle,
Supple boughs are stirred and swirled.
Is there no sound in all the world
Like living wind in trees?

GRAY DAYS

Gray days in the hills
    Are more to me
Than daffodils'
    Gay witchery.

When trees are bare,
    Foreshadowed snow
Croons in the air
    Adagio.

Oh, I have known
    The sunbeams' dance,
And autumn's own
    Rash countenance.

But these are past,
    And to me seem—
Now at the last—
    Some fancied dream.

Gray days are peace,
    And hills content—
A sweet release
    From merriment.

Gray-shadowed hills
    Foretell the snow
And my heart wills
    To have it so.

POINT OF VIEW

Somebody is always interpreting mountains:
"Sublime and noble neighbors of the sky—
Immovably content, and calm and high
Above the turmoil of the world."

Well, only yester morn in saffron light,
I saw gray peaks awake, and listening caught
A bit of wistful talk wherewith they sought
To bridge wide gulfs of sombre height.

And one said: "See how yonder in the town
Soft smoke curls sweetly over roofs of brown?"
And one: "Last night I saw a gliding train
With friendly lights, out on the plain!"

SIESTA

A turtle dove is crooning from the hill,
The drone of honey bees comes from below,
Blue window blinds and friendly doors are still,
And life no longer throngs the patio.

Brown dobe huts grow browner in the sun,
In cooling shades heat's glimmers disappear;
Within gray walls the farmers every one,
Are half asleep: siesta time is here.

Tired bodies rest a while from daily toil,
And yet the hour plays still a sweeter part:
In sunny climes far from the world's turmoil,
It is the symbol of a tranquil heart.

WHO HAS SEEN THE WIND

Who has ever seen the Wind?
Is it gray, like a ghost in moonlight?
Or a purple shadow in the mountains?

Waiting out there on the hill tops
Are the great tall pines and firs,
Watching night and day for a hundred years—
East—west—north—south—up and down---
For one little glimpse of furtive Wind,
Running like deer through the mountains.

Towers of strength on dark-browed hills,
Expectant have they seen ten thousand rising
suns,
As many evening glories in the West,
Soft summer clouds, and rain, and snow,
Heartbreaking April moons,
And wistful ghosts that come and go . . . .
But they have been watching for the Wind,
And they have not glimpsed his face.
And while a thousand clouds and suns
And taunting moons and stars
Come flaunting visual charms
To the watchers atop the hill,
The soft-armed Wind has crept unseen
Among their green-black branches
To run ecstatic, baffled quivers
Up and down their pulsing trunks.

Who has ever seen the Wind?
Great trees have loved his touch,
And later felt his wrath uproot and lay them prone.
Why, though they have spoken his name,
Watching night and day, day and night,
For a dozen hundred years,
They have not seen him come, nor go.

Who has seen the Wind?
Is he the jesting ghost of Moonlight?
Or the passionate soul of Mountains?

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